

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) For Noncitizens



Who can get Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Generally, if you are a noncitizen, you may be eligible for SSI if:

- You were lawfully living in the U.S. on August 22, 1996 and you were blind or disabled on that date, or you were receiving SSI on August 22, 1996.
- You were lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the *Immigration and Nationality Act* (INA) and have a total of 40 credits of work in the U.S. Your spouse's or parent's work also may count.

Some other noncitizens who may be eligible for SSI payments are:

- Active duty members of the U.S. armed forces;
- American Indians born outside the U.S.;
- Certain noncitizens admitted as Amerasian immigrants; and
- Cuban or Haitian entrants.

There are other small groups of noncitizens that also may be eligible for payments. If you are a noncitizen and want to apply for SSI payments, it is best to contact us to see if you are eligible.

Credits of work

A person's work history determines his or her eligibility for Social Security benefits, as well as SSI eligibility for some noncitizens.

In 2004, one credit is added to a person's work record for each \$900 of earnings, up to the maximum of four credits per year.

Each year the amount of earnings needed for a work credit goes up slightly as average earnings levels increase. Work credits remain on a person's Social Security record indefinitely.

We need proof of your status

If you apply for SSI, you must prove your noncitizen status. Noncitizens who have served in the U.S. armed forces also may need to give us proof of military service. These are examples of things you may need to provide:

- As proof of your noncitizen status—a current Form I-94 or I-551 from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or an order from an immigration judge withholding deportation or granting asylum; or
- As proof of military service—U.S. military discharge papers (DD Form 214) showing honorable discharge not based on your noncitizen status.

Your local Social Security office can tell you what other types of evidence you can submit to prove your status.

Seven-year limit for some noncitizens

If your SSI payments are limited to seven years because of your particular noncitizen status, we will send you a letter telling you when your seven-year period ends. We will send you another letter explaining your rights to appeal before we stop your payments.

Information about Medicaid

If you have Medicaid coverage based on your SSI, your Medicaid should continue as long as you get SSI.

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You can file a new claim

If your SSI payments stop because you are not an eligible noncitizen, you can apply again. Contact us right away if you become a U.S. citizen, your immigration status changes and you think you qualify, or you have 40 credits of work. You will need to bring us your naturalization certificate or other documents that show your immigration status.

Important: *If you entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996, then you may not be eligible for SSI for the first 5 years as a lawfully admitted permanent resident even if you have 40 qualifying credits of earnings.*

If you have a sponsor

When you entered the U.S., you may have had someone sign an agreement to provide support for you. This agreement is called an affidavit of support, and the person who signed it is called your sponsor.

We count your sponsor's and his or her spouse's income and resources as yours from the time you came to the U.S. Your local Social Security office can give you more information about these rules and what they mean to you.

Social Security numbers

If you are a lawfully admitted noncitizen with permission to work in the U.S., you may need a Social Security number. Ask for our publication, *Social Security Numbers For Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-10096).

Becoming a citizen

You can get more information about becoming a citizen by writing or visiting a local DHS office or calling **1-800-870-3676** to get an application for naturalization (N-400 Form).

Contacting Social Security

For more information, visit our website at **www.socialsecurity.gov** or call toll-free **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.